

## CHAPTER 12 : THE SCOURGE OF ISLAM

In previous chapters we have alluded to the Muslim scourge which had such a pronounced effect upon Christianity. It was surely a divine judgment upon the moral laxity that characterized so much of Christendom at the time. Let's now consider this Muslim rod more fully.

Islam originated among the wild sons of Ishmael in Arabia. They still honored their father Abraham and still circumcised their sons. Some had learnt a little Christianity, some had picked up some notions from the Jews; but they cared for hardly anything, except their camels, horses, and tents, and had small thought beyond this life.

Among these men there arose, about the year 600, a person named Mahomet. He had at first been servant to a rich widow, whom he afterwards married. Either he fancied, or persuaded others that he believed, that the angel Gabriel spoke to him in a trance, and told him that he was chosen as a great prophet, to announce the will of God, and restore the faith to what it had been in Abraham's days. He caused all that he pretended to have been told by the angel, to be set down in writings, which were called the Koran, meaning the Book, the first sentence of which was, "There is no God but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet."

Mahomet blasphemously pretended to be a much greater prophet than our Lord Jesus Christ. He ordered prayers and fastings and washings at set times, forbade the least drop of wine to be touched, and commanded that not only no image should be adored, but that no likeness of any created thing should exist, promising that all who strictly obeyed all these rules, should be led safely over a bridge, consisting of a single hair, and enter into a delicious garden, full of fruits, flowers, and fountains, there to be waited on by beautiful women. He gave men leave to have four wives, and did nothing to teach them real love, purity, or devotion; and thus his religion suited the bad side of their nature, and he persuaded great numbers to join him. Indeed no unbeliever is so hard to convert as a Mahometan.

Some of the Arabs being offended at the new teaching, wanted to put him to death; and he fled from his home at Mecca. In his anger at this persecution, he declared that the duty of a true Mahometan was to spread his religion with the sword; and calling his friends round him, they fought so bravely that he won back Mecca, and conquered the whole of Arabia. They did not generally kill Christians once Christian territory had been conquered, but they kept them down and despised them; and any Mahometan who changed his religion, was always put to death.

Mahomet called himself Khalif, and ruled for ten years at Mecca, where he died and was buried. Mahometans go on pilgrimage to Mecca, and always turn their faces thither when they pray at sunrise or sunset, throwing water over themselves, or sand if they cannot get water.

The Khalifs who came after Mahomet went on conquering. The chief tribe of the Arabs was called Saracens; and this was the name given to the whole race whom God had sent to punish the Christian world. Jerusalem was permitted to fall into their hands; and though they did not profane the churches, the Khalif Omar built a great mosque, or Mahometan place of worship, where the Temple had once been, so as quite to overshadow the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. They conquered Persia, and spread their religion through that country, putting down the fire worshippers; they seized almost all Asia Minor, where the heretical Christians too easily became Mahometans, and they obtained possession of Egypt.

Then from Egypt they spread all along the north coast of Africa, where the Roman dominion had once been, and were only grieved that the waves of the Atlantic Ocean kept them from going further to the west. In Spain the Gothic king, Rodrigo, mortally offended one of his nobles, who, in revenge, called in the Saracens to punish him; and the whole kingdom fell prey to these Mahometan conquerors, except one little mountainous strip in the north, where the brave Christians drew together, and fought gallantly for their church through many centuries.

It almost seemed as if these terrible Saracens, who bore everything down before them, were intended to conquer all Europe, and crush down the church there as they had done in the east; but God was merciful, and He raised up a great warrior among the Christian Franks. Charles Martel, or Charles of the Hammer, so called, because he always went into battle with a heavy iron hammer, led the Franks against the Saracens, when they came up into the South of France; and in the year 732 gave them at Tours the first real defeat they had yet met with. It turned them back completely, and they never came north of the Pyrenees again; but all over the west of Asia and north of Africa, the first places where Christianity had spread, the heavy dark cloud of Mahometanism settled down, and has never been removed.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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This second volume in a two-part series on church history is primarily an edited version of the following works on church history and Biblical interpretation:

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The on-line resources of Historicism Research Foundation at <http://www.historicism.net/> also proved invaluable for my understanding of Biblical prophecy. Biblical prophecy concerning Christian church history, especially as revealed in the book of Revelation, serves as the foundation upon which all church histories should be based.